RED & BLACK

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Stalinism

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DONATIONS WELCOME

LAND AND FREEDOM

Ken Loach's film "Land and Freedom" evoked latent memories, memories of my youth. My heart palpitated in unison with my thoughts and my being relived the struggle for land and freedom. Land for the disinherited peasants, land as a common ownership of the means of production so that life can be lived in a dignified manner and where freedom acquires a concrete meaning. Naturally, I was outraged at seeing the Stalinists mowing down the revolutionary youths and fighters, trimming the wings of imagination and thus reversing social reconstruction. Since the scars of Stalinism are ingrained deeply in my brain and my heart, it can rightly be inferred that my indignation has been not only justifiable but a personal catharsis. Watching the film I have relived Stalinist atrocities and I have clearly remembered the dismantling of my revolutionary dreams. I too was a member of the Popular Front which, in the name of workers and peasants unity, of anti-fascist struggle and revolutionary changes, conned many revolutionaries into submission and, for the sake of the expediency of the moment, decimated undesirable and uncontrollable elements and liquidated any genuine socialist participation in the struggle for emancipation. While the iron fist of the Party's oppressive machine was grinding the proletariat, the collectivised land was usurped from the peasants, added to the state monopoly and the peasants turned into red chattel slaves. The Guillotine had been working day and night eliminating the revolutionary process and crushing any vestiges of genuine socialist protests.

The title of the film is excellently chosen since Land without Freedom is exploitation and Freedom without Land is an illusion. Land and Freedom is the red thread through all formulations and reformulations of socialism as an emancipatory movement. However, any separation of the land from freedom and vice versa is not only a recoil from revolutionary proceedings to establish socialism but a tacit, if not, open support for the reaction. Traitors are usually disguised in splendid revolutionary feathers, evoke revolutionary slogans and ostensibly display revolutionary ardour. To "carry in our

hearts a new world" is to synchronize hearts, thoughts and actions in a genuine revolutionary praxis.

Unfortunately, many carry in their hearts abstractions, doctrinal mentality, centralist notions and pay lip service to the revolution and revolutionary changes. For them land and freedom are but ideological constructs and, therefore, barriers to revolutionary realizations. Only in this light can be explained the tragic fact that as soon as revolutionary existential import dawns on humanity, due to authentic revolutionary passions, the end results are rivers of blood, terror and oppression. New Molochs, in revolutionary vestments, are enthroned whose power craving can only be fed on the carcasses of authentic revolutionaries.

What amazes me is why are those who guillotined the Soviets, slew the flower of the revolution and then actively participated in the dismantling of the Spanish revolutionary achievements, so indignant about the film? Are they indignant because they are afraid to admit that they were the faithful dogs of the Party? The Party that had claimed to be the guardian of the proletarian virtue, while in fact it was establishing the dictatorship over the proletariat; the Party, the receptacle of collective wisdom, while the upholder of the collective wisdom was the General Secretary, his Central Committee and his Thought Police; the Party, the shiny path leading to the classless society while the Proletariat was led to concentration camps? Was it not the Marxist-Leninist State, the oppressive Super Ego, that supported its Ego- the Bolshevik Moloch- which sent thousands to the caves of Id to silence the voice of dissent, the voice of genuine socialism and what is more important to bury the memory of the revolution? Were they not consciously involved in political assassinations? Were they not Stalinist stooges in the service of the counter-revolution? Perhaps they prefer their Stalinist legacy to be certified by History as a proletarian amnesia and they, therefore, declared innocent?

It is a fact and not a myth that the Russian revolution and the soviet's experimetal undertakings were decapitated by the Bolsheviks. It is also true that the Spanish Communist Party was a Stalinist tool, the fifth anti-revolutionary column. Neither in Russia nor in Spain were the purges mistakes but a deliberate policy to eliminate others' claim to socialism and to deny them

any possibilities of an independent revolutionary experiment in a milieu of freedom. By promoting their faked brand of socialism as an absolute paradigm they denied genuine socialism a role in society and emptied it of any historical meaning paving the way for capitalism to impose its values, its consciousness and its relationships. Other tragic consequences of this policy were the establishment in the Soviet Union, as well as in Spain, torture chambers to psychologically mutilate and firing squads to physically eliminate the revolutionaries and any attempt at establishing revolutionary praxisis. Thus the road to bourgeois perversion had been widely opened.

The criminal responsibility for the entombing of both Revolutions was deliberately projected onto the enemy of Bolshevism, the servants of capitalism, its socialist lackey and petty bourgeois anarchists while the real culprit had remained hidden behind voluminous outputs of official and semi-official historians, sycophants of social realism and naturally the paid scribes of the regime. On the other side, the State's rationality, security, legality, law and order paradigm exonerates their crimes in the eyes of history. Until recently, the communist murdering squads have been defined, and still are in the eyes of myrmidons, as revolutionary gangs. However, when some of their heinious crimes committed in the Spanish Revolution have surfaced in the film "Land and Freedom" and a tiny crevice opened in the iceberg of silence, the old guards were in arms to defend their revolutionary honour. "This film" writes Claudio Venza in U.N 19 Nov. 1995 "has shaken the rampant torpor, has thrown in the face of the well-to-do and ignorant a true and palpitable revolution and by telling a personal story of hopes, love, rage and dignity has provoked unseemly reaction among Stalinist's epigones" who naturally have considered the libertarian utopia buried once and for ever under the debris of massacres, layers of lies and for ever in the darkness of silence, and also with it, the communist counter-revolutionary deeds.

Perhaps the film has stirred the consciousness of those who ignored or tried to minimise important aspects of the Revolution itself. Nonetheless, the real outcry has been the fear that consciousness in the process of awakening may reveal the criminality of those actors who, hiding behind revolutionary slogans, wearing the mask of the revolution, were the gravediggers of the Revolution. Awakening may lead to

awareness that the defeated revolution was also a tragic defeat of the working class on the world scale. The winnig reaction destroyed the potentiality of the workers to stage a genuine revolution and denied them the possibility to be authors of their lives and their destinies, and to initiate liberation on all possible levels within the frame of land and freedom. Equality to build an environment where the individual will flourish, the utopia to which the anarchists subscribe. This is not egalitarian idealism that equalizes differences but a materialistic conception and praxis where equal materialistic conditions are prerequisites for emotional, intellectual and individual differentiations and enrichment. Egalitarian idealism assumes earthly inequalities as necessary prerequisites for heavenly equality, equality at the end of history or at the end of humanity. The awakening of consciousness is the realization that in the defeated revolution were defeated the human opportunities for self-determination, for workers' and peasants' liberation and the eventuating of a classless society.

The workers and the anarchists in Spain were fighting not only against fascism but also tryng to materialize their utopia, *here and now,* not at the end of history. It was the *here and now issue* that became the real danger to any establishment, to Social Democracy and more specifically to Stalinism not to mention bourgeois republicanism. If the Social Revolution was to win the day the myth of the Soviet Union had to be revealed for what it was: a deceptive trick to lull the workers into the most abject economic, emotional and intellectual poverty. Therefore Stalinists had decided by all means to torpedo any revolutionry praxis. since they were harbouring in themselves all the features of anti-revolutionary reaction. They feared the workers' organized movement, unless it was to be dominated by themselves. They feared the emancipation of the workers. They could not stand the idea of a society without Popes, priests, apparatchiks and commissars.

For them the Social Revolution, accordimg to Carillo in his invectives against the Trotskyites, was "the policy of the invaders, of the fascists". To bring it to an end they formed the infamous Fifth Regiment, a spearhead of the counter-revolution. In the beginning the Fifth Regiment was a Spanish communist venture but to prevent it from "deviation" its commander, Major Barbado, was replaced by a typical Stalinist stooge, produce of

Moscow, Lister.

To undermine the Revolution, all parties were to be brought under the control of the Communist Party. They had already controlled the International Brigade and the assault guards. But to dominate the fighting forces it had to have the army under its thumb too. For that purpose it had installed political commissars in all units to facilitate the maximum number of communists promoted to highest ranks. This tactic strengthened the Party but, at the same time, spread discords and rivalries which were cleverly manipulated by the communists to gain the upper hand in the Army and thus deal a death blow to the revolution. Teruel is the glaring case to the point.

Teruel was an important strategic point for the outcome of the revolution. It was here that its destiny was finally sealed. The front of Teruel was held by a strong anarcho-syndicalist contingent while on the fascist side it was Franco himself in charge. Had Teruel fallen, the anarcho-syndicalists were to be blamed for the collapse of the Revolution and any past, present and future purges justified in this light. In addition it was an opportunity to decimate the anarchist forces and make them an easy target for the communists to deal with. Also the communists would use the defeat to gain more control over Indalecio Prieto who was then the Minister of Defence

They put this strategy into operation. First they removed General Sarabia, a Prieto's man, and replaced him with a rabid Stalinist trained in Moscow, Modesto. This was under the orders of generals Grigorovich and Barthe. The manipulation accomplished, the rest followed.

To loseTeruel was to lose the Revolution. Teruel had to be defended at any cost.. For the defence to succeed Teruel needed the support of the artillery. Lister and Modesto were in charge of six batallions and two brigades, an elite army, but their guns remained silent throughout the heroic straggle. In this decisive battle the communists not only sacrificed the anarchists but even their own men. After all the value of human life is to enhance and strengthen the Party. The conversation between El Campesino and Grigorovich, as related by El Campesino, throws some light on the subject:

"What is it you are trying to do? Liquidate the Popular Front? Do you really think we Communists are strong enough to hold out by ourselves?"

"It's not a question of liquidating the Popular Front, but of making it do what we want. We've to discredit the Socialists, and the Anarcho-Syndicalists, and show people that the Communists are the only ones who can hold Teruel." Campesino continues:

"The Anarcho-Syndicalists had to be driven back to compromise them; Teruel has to be lost to compromise Prieto and the socialists. But the Communists had to be the last defenders of the town; this would add to their prestige." So El Campesino was left to defend what he referred to as "a forlorn hope". "If we all were killed, if I was killed, the Communists would be able to blame Prieto for the loss of Teruel"(1) But they failed to tell El Campesino and he survived the massacre. To have an idea of the scale of the massacre one has to compare the losses inflicted on the 101 Brigade under the direct control of El Campesino. Out of 900 men only 82 survived. And El Campesino was in charge of 16,000 men at Teruel.

Teruel was the final nail in the coffin of the Social Revolution. Long before Teruel the communists' motto was "Barcelona must be taken before Zaragoza". First, the Revolution had to be crushed and then the war won. That would explain the Communist counter-revolutionary stance in the earlier stages of the Revolution in Barcelona that had crystalized in the May days events which marked the beginning ot the end of the Social Revolution.

As a counter-revolutionary force, the communists, to use a well known phrase, were boring from within the Revolution. They used every possible means to create divisions. One of them was the land. Vincente Uribe issued a decree legalizing the land already occupied by the peasants. *Frente Rojo* acclaimed it as the most profound revolutionary measure. But those directly involved in the land had different views. Ricardo Zabalza - leftwing socialist and general secretary of *The Federacion Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Tierra* affiliated to U.G.T. pointed out that: "Before any communist minister was in government... the peasants organizations... already confiscated de facto all the land belonging to the rebels". That was con-

firmed by Rafael Monayato Nunez, general secretary of the *Institute of Agrarian Reform* during the first months of the revolution: "I can state positively and this every one knows, that it was not the government that handed the land to the peasants" What Uribe's law had done was to protect small owners and landed bourgeoisie so that they would look to the Communist Party as their defenders if not their saviours. Some of the property had been returned to their previous owners. Peasants cynically remarked: "Small property owners with a splendid number of acres. Are those who have twenty or twenty five workers small land owners"?

Zabalza continued: "There are many landowners whose properties had not been confiscated, either because they were adherent to the left or because they have passed themselves as such. Their tenants were compelled by law to continue the payments of rent...it is impossible to accept the galling injustice of a situation whereby the sycophants of the former political bosses still enjoy a privileged position at the expense of those persons who were unable to rent even the smallest parcel of land because they were revolutionaries"(2)

No wonder that the membership of the Communist Party increased enormously.All counter-revolutionaries on Republican soil joined the Party to dismantle the Revolution. Well orgaized, monolithic,disciplined, well armed the Stalinists were ready to challenge the Revolution and to stab it in its heart-**Barcelona.** That was the decision of the politburo in Valencia on March 1937. At that meeting there were more foreign than Spanish communists. Caballero had to go and the anarchists had to be dealt the death blow. Even if there was an opposition against the removal of Caballero it was squashed by the final touch of Togliati. "I propose that the campaign to soften up the position of Largo Caballero starts at once". "These words were not designed to argue or convince. They were orders devoid of tact and euphemism"(3)

It did not take long for the storm to brew. There were many provocations but on April 25, 1937 Roldan Cortada, a communist, was killed in a mysterious way in Llobregat. The bajo Llobregat, not far from Barcelona, was a hot bed of the most recalcitrant elements of anarchism. They opposed, criticized and combated vehemently the anarchists in

government as well as the militarisation of the militia. Roldan Cortada, a former trientista, had joined the Communist Party and gained his notoriety in dealing with his former comrades. His killing was a provocation and a pretext for the Communists to show their muscles and at the same time indicate where real power was. They staged a demonstration against the anarchists in which the most predominant elements were military and police units. They also disarmed, searched and harassed civilians; ambushed and killed anarchists. But for the sake of "anti-fascist" unity the anarchists refused to retaliate.

Once in ascendancy due to a kind of policy of appeasement by anarchists, the Communists were ready to tackle Barcelona. At 3 o'clock, on 3rd of May, the police commissioner, Rodriguez Salas, another ex-anarchist, with 200 police attacked the Telephone Exchange trying to occupy it.

May Days events are portrayed in the film *Land and Freedom*. They evoked personal tragedy, love, rage and protest, and the sad realization that in the name of the revolution a counter-revolution was taking place; that within the revolution there had been forces aiming at de-revolutionizing the revolution

May Days events marked the beginning of the end; the beginning of a long bloody funeral procession that would carry the body of the Social Revolution to its graveyard. *Frente Rojo* on 4th of May 1937 wrote: "For a long time we tolerated euphemistically called 'uncontrollable' gangs". These gangs are "perfectly controlled by the enemy" and they "should feel the ruthless weight of the popular authority, repression by the government and the punitive action by the masses", which meant punitive action against the masses by the agents of Stalinism. Already in Barcelona 500 were dead, 1500 wounded, not to mention the destiny of many more in the province.

Yet while the counter-revolution was implementing its programme, the CNT ministers were silent or were taking a position which was far far away from anarchism. Camillo Berneri in his letter to Montseny warned:

"On 3rd of Jannuary 1937 in your speech you said: 'The anarchists entered the government to prevent revolutionary deviation, to pursue the Revolution beyond the war and to

oppose any dictatorial tendency independently of where it comes from'.

Well comrades, in April, three months after the practice of collaboration, we are confronted with a situation in the course of which grave events are taking place while others even worse are already emerging....in the Basque countries, in Levant and Castille... the counter-revolution oppresses and threatens to crush everything. The government is in Valencia and it is from there that depart the assault guards with intention to disarm the revolutionary defence groups. It is the civil and assault guards who keep their arms; it is they who, at the rear, try to control the 'incontrollable', that is, to disarm the revolutionary groups...This practice will continue until the internal front is liquidated".(4)

Thus while the Stalinists were viciously attacking the Social Revolution in the Iberian Ukraine the CNT was urging the workers to : "Put down your weapons! Embrace as brothers! We shall be victorious if we are united!"(5) The unity it urged, while the Revolution was besieged by the internal enemy -the Communists- was the unity of people who refused to recognize the march of the reaction. "The Government of the Generalitat must be cleaned out. These demoralizing acts will have to cease regardless of whom is performing them, including ministers"(6). The communists turned a deaf ear since the threats were verbal exercises and had no spur to action. Instead Azana asked the central government to suppress the insurrection, that is, to suppress what was left of the rebellious flame still burning in the heart of the revolutionaries and prevent it turning again into revolutionary fire. Aiguade, Minister of Interior and the police comissioner Rodrigues Sala remained the real masters despite the CNT demanding their resignation. It was they and their police and assault corps who were responsible for the blood of the workers. Julian Gorkin was correct when he said that "Neither of us has urged the masses of Barcelona to take this action. This is a spontaneous response to a Stalinist provocation. This is the decisive moment for the revolution. Either we place ourselves at the head of the movement in order to destroy the internal enemy or else the movement will collapse and the enemy will destroy us. We must take our choice: revolution or counter revolution".(7).

When POUM and some Trotskyites urged for a united action

against the counter-revolution: "Let us unite the factory councils, peasants' assemblies and the armed units into a body to guarantee the revolution and the democratic expressions of the masses" the CNT was non committal. Were the anarchist in power losing touch with revolutionary reality? Were they afraid of compromises? But they had already compromised their principles by participating in the government even if they tried to justify their entryism by the expediency of the revolutionary moment which led them to the ideological graveyard: "Circumstances have transformed the nature of the Spanish government and the Spanish state." Had they? Metamor - phosis of government? Self-deception, wishful thinking or rationalization? After committing the *salto mortale* they were trying to convince the sceptical anarchists and workers that a leopard that changes its spots also changes its nature: "In the present moment the government as an instrument that controls the organ of the state has ceased to be a force of oppression against the working class, just as the state no longer represents a body that divides society into classes. And both will oppress the people even less now that members of the CNT have intervened"(8).

Anarchists in power suffer similar delusion as all those in power, which proves the truth that power corrupts. The CNT in power let itself be, unwillingly or willingly, manipulated by Stalinists. As Jesus Hernandez put it: "We would not have hesitated to ally ourselves with the devil in order to exterminate Negrin if he had obstructed us...we helped to open the schism...by drawing into govermnent collaboration a large part of the anarchist movement which thereafter experienced a process of internal strife".(9)

The Social Revolution that had been taking place in the beginning of the conflict won many admirers, among them Carlo Rosseli: "Catalan anarchists are one of the heroic avantgarde of the Western revolution" and "with them a new world has been born that is a pleasure to serve". But this world retreated under the iron fists of the Stalinist fifth column, the Western Powers' presssure, interfer ence and non interference pacts and practices, power games within the Revolution and fascist and non fascist suppport for Franco.

On the one side, the Spanish Revolution poses an important question of revolutionary characters. "Why is it that all revolutions

end in Bonapartism?" To my mode of thinking the answer to this question is to be found in the fact that the centre of the revolution shifts from the mass base to leadership, from horizontal to hierarchical organizations, from freedom to bureaucracy and the psychology of revolutionaries becomes imbued with the spirit of Jacobinism. The role of the CNT leaders in government, by virtue of being in government, was, willingly or unwillingly an anti-revolutionary one. It failed to prevent the shifting of the centre of the revolution from the workers to the government. On the contrary it smoothed its transmission. It is a fact that one cannot be at one and the same time on the side of a republican Thiers and the Paris Commune.

On the other hand the Spanish Revolution has raised issues pertinent to anarchists. It was claimed that the anarchists were in a minority and anarchism could not eventuate unless the anarchists had used methods that were not compatible with anarchism. Therefore, since anarchists will always be in a minority then it may be argued that anarchism will remain a chimera rather than a utopia to be realized. What is at stake here is the concept of the Social Revolution itself. The Social Revolution is indivisible and cannot be accomplished in stages. The Social Revolution is liberation simultaneously at all levels: political, economical, individual and social. And it is here that anarchism failed since it abandoned its adherence to it. Anarchism was defeated because it forsook its own principles.

Despite the bloody lessons bestowed upon us from the Russian Revolution, the anarchists ignored the political aspect of the Revolution and concentrated their efforts mainly on the economical front. Political power remained in the hands of the bourgeoisie in collaboration with political parties which, from the beginning, set out to undermine the Social Revolution.

And even today there are, and always will be, some who suggest that the Spanish Revolution put with razor sharpness the issue:"Which class shall rule: the bourgeoisie or the proletariat?". The ruling class, be it proletarian, bourgeois or intellectual rules. As such it controls, oppresses, exploits, extracts surplus value, divides and coerces. The apologists of the proletariat as a ruling class are defending and promoting their own interests as an alternative ruling oligarchy where the proletariat will be in a subaltern position. Also a ruling class, if

such is possible, by virtue of ruling is bourgeois, if not by origin, by occupation. The history of leftism in power is a glaring example of that. The proletariat to be revolutionary has to destroy itself as a class and thus destroy all class relationships. To capture power is to play the game of the bourgeoisie as was the case in the Soviet Union.

Among the many causes that led to the defeat of the Revolution were the suppression of the particular, the integration of the personal into the authoritarian ethos, the succumbing by the individual to authoritarian discipline. Another aspect was the myth of delegating power to avantgardists who considered the State to be a revolutionary instance to which the revolution is to be subservient. Thus militarisation, one of the reactionary aspects of the bourgeoisie, was declared a revolutionary step. All to facilitate the process of transforming revolutionaries into tools: to be governed, to obey, to fight and to die.

All these fleeting images of the Revolution Betrayed, shown in the film *Land and Freedom* are distressing for those who having participated in the revolutionary struggle on the side of the Social Revolution, have seen their efforts thwarted by the Stalinists. The film does not "belittle and debase the struggle of the people from a leftist point of view" as Carillo argues but tells the truth about Stalinist fascism, leftist counter-revolutionary activities, firing squads and torture that were used to silence all those who opposed Stalinist diabolical plans. That "our fathers were not assassins" as a writer in the *Humanite*` tries to tell us is not necessarily true. Some of our fathers were assassins. They obeyed the Party, answered to dictates and killed by order. They were soldiers of Stalin, soldiers of the Party, soldiers of the Central Committee, they were on the other side of the barricade fighting against the Social Revolution. To confess to committed crimes is not a sin but it helps to extricate the Revolution from its darkest past. It is no use to hide behind new socialist ideologies, to forge new demagogies, to rebaptize the present to forget or mask the past. Courage is necessary if a new revolutionary force is to be built as an alternative to capitalists New Liberal Order.

As for the anarchists who joined the government, they proved the truth that the Social Revolution does not come from above. It is neither a gift of hierarchs, nor an act of avantgardes chasing power, but an act of the workers themselves. The anarchists in

power? Quixotic players contributing to the asphyxiation of the Social Revolution. For the Social Revolution to be successful it needs the unfolding of all its creative energies to prevent the reaction setting in and the recurring of old regimes. Once its liberatory process is blocked the reaction sets in and the counter-revolution devours the children of the revolution. It happened in Russia and it happened in Spain. This also was the message of the film 'Land and Freedom'. *No Social Revolution will be successful unless land and freedom are its prerequisites.* Since the Stalinists crushed such possibilities, asphyxiated the hopes of the Revolution, the darkness of noon colonized the souls of defeated revolutionaries for whom the genuine revolution had turned into a forlorn hope, as if there were no exit. This lack of faith in revolutionary possibilities weighs heavily on our consciousness, paralyses our thoughts and activities and feeds the avaricious appetite of the New Liberal Capitalist Order.

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The INDUSTRIAL WORKERS of the WORLD

Introduction:

In the United States of America, an organization was formed that had an influence on politics in Australia and in particular upon the more radical side of the working class movement. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), or the Wobblies as they became known as, were formed in 1905 in Chicago (1). The IWW believed in overthrowing the capitalist system by organising the working class along industrial lines into the One Big Union (OBU). Thus members of existing unions would be encouraged to join the IWW or if not unionised to make the IWW their union and and work towards common aims. It is the purpose of this section to trace the ideas and actions of the IWW in the USA and Australia in order to see how these affected the emerging Communist Party and the trade union movement in the 1920s and 1930s as well as the long-term effects the IWW had on subsequent left-wing organisations and movements.

The IWW in the USA

The IWW was formed in Chicago in 1905, when Bill Haywood, a Western mining unionist opened its first conference. As he stated:

> We are here today to confederate the workers...into a working class movement that shall have for its purpose the emancipation of the working class from the slave bondage of capitalism (2)

The delegates to this conference represented a broad range of radical political activists either being involved in the trade union movement or socialist parties.(3) The unionists represented a wide range of occupations but they shared a common belief that craft unionism should be replaced by unions organized along industrial lines. However a stumbling block for unity were the differences in political ideology amongst the delegates. Two interrelated views predominated at this conference: firstly, the syndicalist view that the union movement should be central to political change and unions should be organised along industrial lines; secondly, the Marxist view that a political party was

essential to help co-ordinate trade union work. However the delegates were able to establish enough unity to develop a Preamble and Constitution. The opening lines of the Preamble stated:

> The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life (4)

and the end of the Preamble stated:

> It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organised, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall be overthrown. By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.(5)

The tensions between the two fundamental positions syndicalism and Marxism, became so great that by 1908 two 'schools' had emerged. The 'Chicago school' based mainly in the West, amongst itinerant workers, had more of a syndicalist ideology, and more importantly believed in 'direct action' i.e strikes and demonstrations, to obtain its goals. This group obtained the nickname of the 'Bummery' from the other faction. The main spokesperson was Bill Haywood. The other 'school' was known as the 'Detroit School' or the doctrinaire group. They organised more traditional unionists in the East , had more of a revolutionary Marxist tradition and believed in the political process i.e political parties and political action. The leader of this group was Daniel DeLeon, a long time American socialist.(6) DeLeon and Haywood thus had different political experiences, DeLeon gaining his from socialist parties whereas Haywood gained his experience from union work. The IWW had enormous success in America in organising itinerant workers which other unions would not cover, as well as being involved in organising ethnic minorities. It was involved in numerous struggles but for the purposes of this study three of the more outstanding examples will be mentioned. Firstly two strikes which brought the IWW's name into the public arena will be discussed. These two strikes had the effect of spreading the

IWW's cause around the world. Secondly mention will be made of the Wobblies most famous activist, Joe Hill.

A strike of textile workers in the Massachusetts town of Lawrence was described by an observer as "a social revolution *in parvo".(7)* At the beginning of 1912 the owners of the Lawrence mill instituted a pay cut. As the workers were already paid poorly, a pay cut brought about a strike of some 15000 workers. Lawrence Local 20 of the IWW had about 300 paid up members. The leadership of the Local wired for help from the central office and a number of leaders went to Lawrence. When Bill Haywood arrived there by train, he was met by a large crowd of the strikers and their supporters. The various ethnic groups, Belgians, Italians, Germans, and English displayed a great deal of solidarity. Pickets and police clashed on a number of occasions. Some of the leaders were arrested and one was charged with murder. However a crucial factor in gaining them victory was the fact that they were forced to evacuate the children who suffered the most the lack of food. When they were sent away from Lawrence to stay with sympathetic friends in New York, public opinion moved towards the strikers. When a second group of forty children attempted to go to Philadelphia the police intervened and separated the children from their mothers and arrested the mothers on charges of negligence. A Congressional investigation was held due to the outcry from newspapers and the public and finally the employers agreed to 7 1/2% rise. The IWW membership rose to 14000 during this time. (8)

In Paterson, New Jersey, 25000 workers struck in this textile town in 1914. Leaders and political activists were arrested. John Reed, the political journalist, organised a pageant of the strike in Madison Square Garden. A thousand strikers took part and the letters IWW were blazed in red lights across the stage. Thousands of people saw the pageant and this brought the IWW's name to public attention. However the strike did not succeed and the strikers dispersed into a number of isolated groups.

Perhaps the best known Wobbly was Joe Hill. As well as being an activist in the movement he wrote songs which were published in IWW papers and pamphlets and sung at various gatherings, demonstrations and picket lines. In 1915 he was

charged with the murder of a shop-keeper. Although evidence suggested he was innocent, the authorities were determined to see that he was convicted. This persecution led to a campaign being organised to support him. He was executed two years after his arrest. His final words to Bill Haywood were

> Goodbye Bill. I die a true blue rebel. Don't waste time in mourning. Organize.(9)

Many years after his death this message became an inspiration for the union movement. The song Joe Hill was made famous by Paul Robeson, the American negro singer and sung by other left-wing folk-singers, including Joan Baez, during the 1960s. The most potent words, "said Joe, I never died" typified a spirit of organisation which influenced the trade union and left-wing movements for many years.(10)

The IWW in Australia

According to Turner (11) Australian workers became aware of socialism from two sources, these being firstly revolutionary theorising from Europe and secondly practical experience in the mass labour movement. A Socialist Labor Party (SLP) was formed at the turn of the century along the lines of the one formed by DeLeon in the USA .(12) Syndicalism was beginning to take hold in certain unions such as the waterside workers, bush workers, miners and construction labourers, as these unions were forced to take more industrial action. In 1907, IWW clubs were formed in Sydney, based on the Detroit model. Thus the IWW was introduced into the Australian labour movement by the SLP.(13) Although given a degree of independence from the Party, the IWW clubs remained ideologically tied to the Detroit faction. Their political orientation relied on a political party to orchestrate political change within society. This group had a problem in recruiting unionists to their cause. However, in 1911, a group of socialists in Adelaide obtained the Chicago IWW Charter and they set up a branch which became known as the Australian Administration. This idea spread and organisations were formed around the country which became known as 'locals'. Direct the paper of the Australian Administration, in its edition of May 1915 listed eight locals operating in Australia, these being,

Local No	Place
1	Adelaide
2	Sydney
3	Broken Hill
4	Port Pirie
5	Fremantle
6	Boulder City
7	Brisbane
8	Melbourne (14)

Frank Cain states that the Wobblies were opposed to four developments in the capitalist state and thus developed four ideological positions. The four 'antis', as Cain calls them, were anti-conventional trade unionism, anti-Arbitration Court, anti-parliamentary process and anti-Labor Party governments. The four ideological positions were syndicalism, the One Big Union(OBU), surplus value and sabotage.(15)

The IWW were opposed to unions being organised along craft lines and thus fought for industrial unionism. They saw the existing unions as simply bolstering up the capitalist system by supporting Labor Governments and the Arbitration system. The IWW called for unions to be organised in six areas, transportation, mining, public service, manufacturing, construction and agriculture and pastoral. This situation would lead to the formation of the One Big Union (OBU).

The Arbitration Court and Parliament were seen as institutions that kept the workers under control. The IWW argued that the court was largely on the side of the 'bosses' and the workers were forced to accept their decisions by law. Too much power was given to parliament and this once again tricked the workers into believeing they were getting justice. When the Labour Party became the governing party it dropped its socialist principles in order to stay in power.

Although never actually stating that they followed a syndicalist philosophy, the policy of the unions running society along industrial lines was certainly a syndicalist concept. According to Cain "the IWW in the USA considered syndicalism in the Scandinavian countries to be a brother of the IWW in the USA and Australia,"(16) The OBU was another name for industrial

unionism and this concept meant that all unions would restructure and form bodies organised along industrial lines. Four levels of activity should take place, these being workplace unions; industrial district council which consisted of representatives of all the work place unions in a particular locality; national industrial union which brought all workers together in one industry and six department of industries, these being transportation, mining, public service, manufacturing, construction and agriculture and pastoral.

The concept of surplus value developed by Marx was put in a simple form by Wobbly activists and appeared in its publications. It was explained by the following example. When a factory owner sells his goods for a certain amount of money, some of this goes into wages and materials, but the remainder is profit which is called surplus value. This profit represents unpaid labour and should be added to the workers wages. In its publication Direct Action the writers used this simple example to illustrate the injustices in the capitalist system on a grand scale. To the Wobblies and all socialists, surplus value was the fundamental problem with capitalism. The workers must struggle for surplus value to be transferred to them.

Sabotage was interpreted by critics of the IWW as a violent act and was one of the factors that led to the destruction of the movement. However in the Australian context sabotage meant to 'go slow' or was sometimes referred to by the scots as 'ca canny'.(17) The justification for sabotage was that the workers were "asserting their rights to the surplus product of their labour."(18) The term sabotage remained on the masthead of the publication Direct Action until the arrests of the leadership during the anti-conscription struggles.

Influences in Australia:

The ideas of both factions of the IWW were very influential in Australian working class politics. Direct Action had a readership of over 1600 by 1915.(19) These ideas took hold amongst the semi-skilled and unskilled nomadic workers, just as in the USA. Thus shearers, waterside workers, at the rank and file level, became members of the Wobblies as well as their own union. Wobbly ideas played a major role in some of the great disputes in this period, one exampje being the Brisbane

Tramway strike of 1912.(20) The direct action of the Chicago school had a lot of appeal to revolutionaries. Wobblies became involved in the anti-conscription struggles, influenced to a certain extent by James Connoly, an IWW advocate and Irish patriot. The authorities clamped down on the activities of these groups and virtually suppressed the movement. In this section these influences will be discussed in detail.

The short and long-term influence of the IWW in Australia can be summarised in four areas. Firstly some IWW members helped form the Communist Party in 1920. Secondly, the ideas of the OBU were taken up 'officially' by the trade union movement and the concept stayed with the left of the trade union movement for generations. Thirdly, some traditions that the Wobblies had developed in the workplace were continued on in various industries including anti-authoritarian behaviour. Their direct action approach to the job was an inspiration for unionists in the maritime, coal and building industries as well as influencing the New Left in the 1960s. Lastly, political activities such as the struggle over conscription and the free speech movement were taken up by the New Left in the 1960s. The Wobblies remained an inspiration for many people on the Left because of their anti-authoritarian stand.

The first area of influence was involvement in the formation of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) in 1920. Thomas Glynn and a number of others IWW activists were at the inaugural meeting of the CPA. As seen earlier the fundamental differences the Chicago IWW had with the Detroit section was one of political philosophy, so it is difficult to ascertain how the Chicago Wobblies would work with other activists in the emerging CPA. Their anti-political stance was in conflict with other sections of the CPA who believed in democratic centralism and the dictatorship of the proletariat and this would be a huge stumbling block for unity in the future. But their hatred of the capitalist system and their basic anti-authoritarianism had a long time influence in the unions at the rank and file level over which the CPA eventually had influence. Two of the unions were the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) and the Miner's Federation. The Comintern was trying to 'win over' various organisations in the 1920's to the cause of world communism and the IWW was targetted. In a pamphlet titled The Communist Internationale to the IWW: An Appeal of the Executive Committee of the third International at

Moscow (21), Tom Glynn, in the Foreword points out that the Third International did not share the views of the IWW that the industrial organisation is sufficient to obtain a social and economic revolution. However he recommended that IWW people read the pamphlet as the IWW and the communists agreed that the capitalist system was heading for destruction. In the pamphlet, Zinoviev argued that the IWW and the communists had much in common in their criticism of American society and thus the capitalist system. However he stated that the communists would abolish the State after going through the period of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. A further disagreement was the concept of democratic centralism. This concept appears to be in contradiction to the syndicalist idea of the union movement being the basis for the organisation of society.(22) The fundamental debate between Marx representing a more authoritarian position in relation to the State and Bakunin representing a more libertarian view was bein.g fought out here in a very practical sense.

The second influence was the concept of the One Big Union being incorporated into the trade union movement. Some IWW ideas were being incorporated into the organisation of the trade union movement and the socialist parties as early as 1907. In this year the Socialist Federation of Australia adopted a resolution in support of industrial unionism with special reference to the IWW. (23) In 1908 at the Sydney Trade Union Congress, a number of unions and peak councils submitted resolutions advocating the adoption of IWW ideas. Some of these unions were the Newcastle Labour Council, Newcastle Coal Trimmers, Sydney Coal Lumpers, Saddle and Harness Makers, United Labourers and Wrightwill AMA, Ships' Painters and Dockers. These resolutions were not successful but a watered-down version, put forward by the Barrier Amalgamated Miners' Association was carried. (24) However, according to Brissenden (25), the Detroit 'school' had the long term influence in Australia. Because Auatralia had a large Labour Party and a strong trade-union movement some of the more moderate ideas of the IWW became incorporated into these organisations. The Labour Council of NSW in 1918, (26) adopted the OBU and the structure was to be called the Workers Industrial Union of Australia (WIUA). A group of members of the Australian Socialist Party obtained the charter from Detroit to form the Workers International Industrial Union (WIIU), this being a

separate organization from the WIUA, one organization trade unionised, the other, party based.

The incorporation of these ideas into the 'mainstream' trade union movement continued in the 1920s. The Miners' Union was one of the unions that adopted its constitution in line with the changed IWW one. One of the clauses in the Preamble to its 1921 Rules and Constitution book stated that industrial unionism was the only way to achieve destruction of the capitalist system.

> These conditions can be changed, and the interests of the working class advanced, only by an organisation so constituted that all members in any one industry, or in all industries, shall take concerted action when deemed necessary, thereby making an injury to one the concern of all (27)

and further it stated as one of the Objects that

> To bind together in one organisation all the wage workers in the Mining, Coke and Smelting Industries of Australasia, to achieve the purpose set out in the Preamble.(28)

The Australian Railways Union (ARU) was another union that advocated industrial unionism and was heavily influenced by Wobbly ideas.(29)

The third area of influence was in relation to the rank and file. In Australian folklore it is generally accepted that our anti-authoritarian attitude comes from our convict and Irish heritage. The Wobblies reinforced these attitudes in a political sense by adopting a general anti-authoritarian posture towards institutions and in particular the 'boss' and this position "struck a chord' with many workers. The Wobblies adopted patterns of behaviour in various industries that continued on long after the IWW did not exist as a formal organisation. These democratic practices were introduced to the workplace and Ian Bedford has argued that the descendants of the Wobblies were to be found in the maritime industry. The industrial practices of the workers kept the spirit alive. He stated:

> The informal structure of the maritime industry - the pick-up system on the wharves,the lunch-hour meetings, the lapse of the function of a particular job delegate when the job ends - has kept the spirit alive longer in the Waterside Workers'

Federation than in most places (30)

Meredith Burgmann has also contended that the Wobblies exemplified ouvrierism, "a rejection of intervention by outside experts and an exclusive reliance on mass working class experience and action."(31) The Wobblies were not necessarily anti-intellectuals but rejected the jargon that seemed to go hand in hand with socialist parties. This position could be summed up in the words of one Wobbly

> One DA [Direct Action](32) in the hands of a man who has paid for it will do more good than fourteen philosophers discussing the referenda and Michael Bakunin (33)

The last influence discussed here is the role the IWW played in the free speech movement and the anti-conscription struggle. In America and Australia the Wobblies carried out direct action in the cause of free speech. They would go to towns and get arrested for speaking in public. This tactic of mass arrests would not only draw attention to the particular issue but it also highlighted the lack of freedom in capitalist society. In Spokane, in the USA, in 1909, an IWW organiser was jailed for thirty days for reading the Declaration of Independence in public. In response the IWW called on all its members to flood the jails in Spokane.(34) This behaviour was carred out by activists in the civil rights struggles in the 1960s both in America and Australia and in particular in Queensland in the civil liberties campaigns of the 1960s and the late 1970s.

The IWW led the struggle against conscription in the First World War. Tom Barker was arrested for publishing this poster (35)

TO ARMS!!

Capitalists, Parsons, Politicians,
Landlords, Newspaper Editors, and
Other Stay -at - home Patriots.

YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU IN THE TRENCHES !!!

WORKERS

FOLLOW YOUR MASTERS (35)

The Wobblies' opposition to conscription brought the movement into national prominence and attracted the oppressive attention of the State. The police raided their premises and generally harassed their most active members. A number of IWW men were arrested for allegedly attempting to burn down some buildings in Sydney.(36) A campaign was organised to set them free. All their political work was directed into the release of the men and the organisation became ineffectual.

Greg Mallory

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Book revew

Evolution & Revolution An introduction to Life and Thought of Peter Kropotkin

by Graham Purchase,
Jura Media, Sydney, 1996.

To review a book that is quite hard to understand is a rather difficult task, more so if one does not see its purpose. From a personal point of view it does not tell me anythng I don't already know about Kropotkin. It also failed to critically evaluate Kropotkin's ideas. Graham Purchase's journey in the vast prairie of Kropotkin's land is a zig-zag journey without a compass. To what extent then my attempt will be successful is a question mark but I ask forgiveness if, instead of clarifying, I muddle issues.

Take the chapter on Mutual Aid, for example. It is stated that Kropotkin explores two important observations. The first is the distinction between co-operation or mutual aid and sociability. However, the exposition is hard to follow. On p.46 we are told that co-operation is an evolutionary tendency and that such a " tendency does not imply necessity". Fine. But then on p.48 sociability is contrasted with mutual aid as being " in many cases not imposed through evolutionary necessity". The two statements contradict each other. The second is the concept that "intelligence is an eminently social faculty" (p.49) However, this "exploration" is limited to two further brief quotations and from then to the end of the chapter on p.57 we zig-zag through fungi, beetles, bacteria, DNA etc, etc, etc. What is the point of it all? By giving us this guided tour through DNA land and telling us about various symbiotic relations has Graham really elucidated Kropotkin's position or made it more relevant to the present? I don't think so.

The claim is made that "*Mutual Aid* is a biased... and rhetorical work" (p.45) My interpretation is that whatever had been the purpose of Kropotkin in writing **Mutual Aid** it was not rhetorical, it was an important thesis towards the understanding of socialism as a way, as a factor of social transformation. Mutual aid has been and is an important factor of socialist life if socialism is to become a relevant social reality. Another claim is that "The importance of Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* in anarchist theory does not lie in its

crude survivalist thesis, but rather in showing us that intelligence is a natural byproduct of sociability" (p.50) Even if this is true what is the bearing of intelligence to anarchism? Has intelligence operated more anarchistically in social praxis? And if intelligence "is a quality inseperable from human nature" (p.50) what is its corollary to anarchism?

Perhaps the greatest problem with this chapter is the underlying attitude to science. The last lines state that Kropotkin's ideas "closely mirror modern theories of symbiotic evolution/life processes such as those I have outlined above." (p. 57) But at the beginning of the chapter we are told that " the ideology of 'nature red in tooth and claw' remains a commonly accepted view of the evolutionary process." (p.44) So which one is it? Is he contrasting "expert" scientific theories against "inexpert" general opinions? Are scientists the new witch doctors? Should science in the future reveal a cosmos dominated by massive central forces - then what? Would that imply that we should try to organise our social relations in a like manner?

To evoke science as a prerequisite for establishing norms and social relations is to transform it into an ideological weapon and make it a rational instrumentality in the service of dogmas and doctrines, a tool in the hands of the owners of force and of power, of governments or would be governments. When socialism became scientific it forsook socialist praxis, destroyed revolutionary poiesis and inaugurated the Socialist Guillotine to eliminate its own base. Dialectic, instead of being a science or a method of clarifying various mental and social processes has become a "progressive" triad leading to the triumph of capitalism

The revolutionary aspects of socialism were its utopian elements. Socialism was not a science but a movement of protest. A movement which has tried to dismantle hierarchies, domination, governments and to establish social structures where justice and wealth are equally distributed. In the struggle to materialise their utopia socialists established solidarity, mutual aid, and evoked economic equality and freedom as prerequisites for the future society. Socialism's basic tenet was society, its function, its organisation, its structure precluding oppression, exploitation and human suffering. Science might or might not be helpful in the process of socialist becoming, but to deduce

socialism from a scientific point of view is to give science unwarranted prestige. Science in the hands of capitalists or, for that matter, authoritarian socialists is a factor of oppression.

Unlike utopian socialism, scientific socialism is trapped into scientific determinism serving **progress** while negating socialism. To give socialism a scientific status, expressions such as "inevitabilities", "necessities" "dialectical triads", progressive "historical leaps", in the "final analysis" were introduced whilst socialism was caving in to capitalist demands. To promise socialism at the end of history is an easy option from present predicaments. It is a religious glorification of a dead body. Socialism succumbed to scientific illusions and many anarchists were victims of it too.

Many claims made throughout the book are highly debatable. For example. "the general tendency of human evolution was essentially integrative and social in its orientation".(p.59) True, but its integrative orientation was the absorption of diversity, the destruction of multiplicity, the creation of national monstrosities and global integration into the capitalist ethos. In no way did it favour socialism, or anarchism for that matter.

He writes that "Kropotkin, with his *narodnik* faith in the Russian peasant commune, the *mir,* would not have envisioned the complete disappearance of small-scale traditional rural and community lifestyles." (p.74) Kropotkin need not have envisioned the disappearance of small-scale or village communities. His main interest had been to point to the **mir** as a workable model for the future social reorganization be it village, town or city. Kropotkin's aim was to emphasize the libertarian aspects of community's existence and to urge revolutionaries to work along these lines towards the building of free society. He wanted to place anarchism in its own traditions: federalism, decentralisation, freedom and horizontal organization as against imperialism, authoritarianism and verticalism. In the State he saw the destroyer of locality, of society, of the individual, whilst in the anti-state movement he saw the creation of multi-centres of activities, organizations and life styles on anti-authoritarian bases

To argue that "Many customs in organic communities of the past were irrational"(p. 107) it is to impute that present day organic communities are somehow rational. Does the fact that

many of them are organized around Zodiacs, holding hands to absorb cosmic energy, to exhort the blessing of the spirits, to use chiromancy as predictability of the future and other lunatisations of social life make them more rational than the irrationality of past communities?

Re the State the point is made that "One would be hard pushed to discover any organised group of people that became as stupid, intolerant and brutal as the White South Africans" (p.107) It is true that the State has all the power of destruction: military arsenals, power to coerce people into submission, into uniformity. It has the terror in its hands: army,police, prisons,unemployment, starvation, conscription etc. If the state excels in violence, it need not minimize violence as a tool in the hands of the people. It is the social fabric that contains violence and is condoned by the forces that benefit from it: capitalists, employers, social classes, politicians and state bureaucrats, not to overlook the army. Proclivity for violence is within us.

Re community and individuality. "it is obvious that the bio-social role of human culture and custom cannot be seen as diametrically opposed to the growth of individual expression and personality..."(p. 113) Why not? What can prevent such a "bio-social role" from becoming a culture of tyranny, a social tyranny. If the models lack socialist-anarchist ethos within their existence then they cannot be recommended. Many social experiments, including bio-social, are not only bio-degradable but reflect and re-enact the authoritarian drama of alienation. Some individuals are empowered, others emaciated.Some dictate, others assent. The will of the stronger: ipso dictum.

Any utopia is functional independently of its scientific content. Its relevance to us is its existential import. It is one thing to map autonomy but another to be an autonomous and free person.

Graham seems mesmerized by scientific progress and tries to convince us of its anarchistic potentiality. Nonetheless, his statements are often of the kind that elicit a "maybe yes or maybe no" response, from me at least. " interest-related 'bulletin boards', the 'World Wide Web' and 'e-mail' ... can be utilised by decentralized non-government organisations" (p.74) It can but it does not imply that it will lead to a better

understanding of anarchism nor that they will be used for anti-authorilarian purposes. All scientific discoveries are double-edged, but mostly they serve the infamous master **money.**

"Communities and cities cannot be artificially produced through small-scale communal experimentalism - nor can they be successfully planned from above".(p.77) Depends what is meant by "artificially produced"? City as an ideological construct or city as a developer's dream.The latter are growing like mush-rooms. If communality does not exist, if cooperation is shunned, if mutual aid is non-functional and freedom dysfunctional it is a sign of times, of education, indoctrination, of alienation. The **Obtschina**, the city as market places of ideas were organic expressions of life, not organic conceptualisations of the learned, nor an imposition on reality, artifacts.

Yet, Graham is plannng his bio-regional communities from above, from a hypothetical anarchist alternative, from a personal vision without rank and file decision making. Community cannot be a will of an individual, but co-operation of individuals practicing mutual aid, solidarity, a movement from below and sizes are irrelevant.

Kropotkin, according to Graham "was fully aware that small non-organic communities...could become stifling and tyrannical". (p.123) Interesting! When on p.77 he claims that communities cannot be artificially created, he now assumes that they can, since non-organic is an artifact. That they become "stifling and tyrannical" perhaps is true but it can also be true of organic communities.

Did Kropotkin ever use the term organic or non-organic in describing communities, or is this a twist to try to modernise his thoughts? And what actually is organic: a cluster of people moving in the circles of authoritarianism and micro neurotic relationships?

"Thus individualists, in rejecting society and ignoring the necessary and the inevitability of social responsibilities...merely advocated an impossible and 'foolish egoism' ". (p. 116) If some indi idualists advocate the impossible egoism why create so much fuss about impossibility?. They will die of their own illusions. As for "foolish egoism" it lurks within the heads of many socialist and anarchist acti ists. The anarcho-individualist position

does not imply rejecting society. They are saying that they put themselves outside of those societies they consider to be authoritarian. They do not like to participate in its political and authoritarian games. They refuse any claim to it and they reject its authoritarian codes. They do not allow their political dissent to be incorporated in political games which re-enforce capitalist ethos. But that does not mean rejecting non-oppressive social relationships. And then if Kropotkin considers self-gratification as an"annihilation of personality" do those who write books and articles lack self-gratification?

An individualist who believes in a nation, in a world of slaves who "must be constantly turned outwards, his time occupied almost entirely in the active business of oppressing others" (p117) is not and cannot be an anarcho-individualist. This is a contradiction in terms. And then if, as Graham puts it, power is an "irresistible drug" are the anarchists , in communities of narcotics, immunized against it? In fact power as a drug metamorphosed socialism into the servant of capitalism and seduced many revolutionaries into the ranks of the reaction.

To brand individualist-anarchists as if they are "bloated and disfigured" egotists is to fail to see that this is a visible or invisible trade-mark of many socialist as well as anarchist activists.

This book has many flaws and it is hard to dissect it for a proper critical evaluation. It added nothing in depth, precision and clearness as far as the thought and ideas of Kropotkin are concerned. Also it has not contributed to enlarge my anarchistic horizon. To state it otherwise would be hypocrisy. The best suggestion is read it for yourself and draw your own conclusions.

Jack

MAY 1937; COUNTER - REVOLUTION

Many events led to the collapse of Socialist Realism as a practice and revealed the bankruptcy of Marxism-Leninism. But the death of praxis is not the death of a dogma. Religious experiences are sufficient evidence of that. Religious dogmatic elements of Marxism-Leninism persist. This in itself is not a factor that concerns anarchists. What concerns us

here is the tendency to undermine anarchism, here and now, as a possible alternative to capitalism and by various tricks to resurrect the corpse of Marxism-Leninism.

Concerted attacks are directed at the Spanish Revolulution trying to minimize its significance as a revolutionary praxis and by denigrating it to denigrate anarchism. The purpose: to re-introduce the banckrupt Marxist-Leninist practices as revolutionary tools. Assessing and reassessing Spanish Anarchism is to be mostly seen in this light. To counter these kinds of games and to elucidate some important aspects of the Revolution I am re-printing Rene Berthier's article which appeared in *Le Monde Libertaire* Summer, 1997.

Ed.

The May Day events in Barcelona 1937 are open to many interpretations. But they can be reduced to one main point: how could Stalinism use anti-fascism to liquidate the Social Revolution.

To achieve this it was necessary to liquidate the anarcho-syndicalist movement. But at the time this movement, which gave a vast impetus to the collectivisation in industries, transports, and agriculture, was too strong and and too popular to be attacked directlly. It had to be isolated and to do so Stalinists began by attacking POUM, a small revolutionary Marxist Party with a few Trotskyite members.(1)

Timing was perfect. In Germany Stalin became a nazi bed fellow by sacrificing the German Communist Party in order to liquidate the German Social Democracy. Any movement claiming affiliation with the working class that was not controlled by Moscow was to be liquidated. Stalin carried out a campaign against the "Hitlero-Trotskyites". The POUM, therefore, became targeted by the Spanish Communists who wanted to break it up. On 13th of December 1936 they removed Andre Nin from the Catalonian Generalitat, if not with the complicity, at least with the consent of the leadership of CNT, the latter not realising that this, and many other manoeuvres, had each time contributed to the isolation of the Confederation and making it more vulnerable to Stalinism.

The Stalinists had already succeeded in eliminating POUM

militants from all responsible positions in UGT, which before being taken over by Stalinists had been friendly towards the CNT provided that within it there were enough radical elements to favour such an alliance. Thus, when the CNT obtained the removal of the two Marxist parties from the Generalitat leaving space to the UGT only, it was the Communist Party it had to face. The UGT, controlled by the communists had literally become the organisation of the middle class and employers.(2) The events of May 1937 proved a lack of understanding on the part of the confederal body to grasp power relationships, to understand the real and the counter-revolutionary nature and role of Stalinism, as had the workers who supported the CNT.

SPANISH COMMUNISM ?

Before the Civil War the Spanish communists were virtually insignificant and could only grow by appealing to well-to-do peasants who opposed the collectivisation, to the petty bourgeois and many police and military functionaries. The backbone of the Spanish communist movement, supported by Moscow, offered its organisational experience to those social layers whose interests, at the time, coincided with Stalin's international policy. The latter could not bear the thought of a proletarian revolution developing outside of his control and on a radically different base than that of the Russian Revolution. By participating in the government and infiltrating the institutions of power, the communists acquired a strength out of proportion to their social base. Supported by the Catalan middle class nationalists they openly declared themselves against the collectivisation -which is a strange paradox since in Russia they imposed it by force, with an extraordinary violence that cost many millions of lives.

In October 1936, a communist was appointed as Minister of Supplies, a post previously held by an anarchist. The workers committees of supplies, established by the anarchists, which functioned efficiently, were dissolved. The distribution of food guaranteed by a system of direct sale of products organized by the unions' committees was handed to private business. The prices had increased leading to a shortage. People's discontent escalated but the communists blamed the anarchists.

Previously, police forces -civil and assault guards- had been dissolved and replaced by 'security patrols'. But the police

were soon to be reestablished under Stalinist control. The same happened with the militarisation of the militia on 10 October, 1936, a move fervently supporterd by the communists. *La Batalla* on 1st May, 1937 reported on the social components and on the method of recruitment of police under communist control: "..In Catalonia they concentrated on part of the formidable army of carabiniers trained as counter-revolutionaries recruited among communist elements that lacked political education, among workers without any ideology and *declasse* petty bourgeois who had lost hope of recuperating their position..."

An attack was launched against freedom of expression.The censorship became more and more extensive and included political censorship. A meeting of CNT-POUM in Tarragona on 26th of February 1937 was forbidden.

On March 26, 1937 libertarians opposed a decree to dissolve security patrol, to ban civilians carrying guns, to forbid guards and police officers to have political and union affiliations, and at the same time to dissolve the workers' and army's councils which was equivalent to liquidating the real power of the Confederation the driving force behind the militia, the master of the street and the factories. In fact the security patrols had not surrendered their guns. On the contrary the militants rushed to the streets and disarmed the regular police who resisted; there was fire exchangeed. Measures to suppress the security patrols were taken with the consent of the anarchist councilors in the Generalitat, but, when criticised by the rank and files they withdrew their support of the decree. The crisis was solved by forming a new govern- ment, which, in fact, was identical to the previous one. The armed confrontations continued.

The Facts

The Stalinist provocation on 3rd of May, 1937 was an outcome of a long series of skirmishes aimed at liquidating the social revolution and the libertarians as a hegemonical force in the Catalan working class by reestablishing the power of the bourgeoisie as required by the technical advisers of GPU.(3).

What happened on that day? On Monday 3rd, 1937 the communist police tried to take control of the Telephone Exchange in Barcelona which was controlled by the CNT-UGT,

but the majority of the employees belonged to the CNT.

The militia who were there took arms and successfully resisted. An hour later FAI's militia and members of security patrols arrived as a back up. The factories stopped work. Guns came out of hiding and barricades were erected. The insurrection spread right through the town. The government, including its anarchist members!, was besieged by the popular forces. It was a spontaneous authentic answer to a Stalinist provocation The regional CNT and FAI's committees were content simply to ask for the resignation of Rodriguez Sala, the communist commissar of law and order in Barcelona. As if Sala could be who he was without the forces behind him.

As on 19th of July 1936, when the fascists tried to capture power, it was the rank and file, the CNT-FAI's confederal defence committees that organized peoples' counter-attack, but this time against the opinion of the CNT leadership.

The following day, Tuesday 4th of May, the battle raged all day. The quick reaction of the CNT-FAI's and POUM against the police was amazing, but so was the tenacity of the police infiltrated by the communists.

This crisis revealed a sharp conflict within the republican camp. The fate of the social revolution was at stake. While the proletariat was fighting on the streets against the internal reaction, in the republican camp, the top managers were bargaining : a new government ought to be formed. The UGT and CNT leaders called for a cease fire. The anarchist ministers of the central government supported the initiative, but Companys, the president of the Generalitat refused to dismiss Rodriguez Sala.

Garcia Oliver, an anarchist minister in the central government, head of the CNT as well of FAI made a ridiculous speech and called for the laying down of arms in the name of anti-fascist unity: "All those who died today are my brothers, I embrace and bow before them" including, without doubt, the Stalinists and the police. Oliver corroborated the idea that the fighting, instead of being an authentic class struggle, was seen as a passing mishap in the republican camp. The communist project was to re-establish all the features of the bourgeois order: private property, centralisation of power, police, hierarchy. He

made void the content of the struggle which was: either pursuing the social revolution or restoring the bourgeois State.

During the night of May 4th to 5th the bargaining in the palace of the Generalitat continued. The communists wanted to reduce futher the power of the workers' committees and had to face the armed workers. Their aim: to crush the revolution.

The anarchist leaders were overtaken by the events. Over the radio one after another, Garcia Oliver, Federica Montseny, both members of CNT as well as FAI and many others urged the fighters to lay down their arms. Companys, demanded as preliminary condition, the withdrawal of the workers from the streets.

The next day, Wednesday 5th of May, the fight was more violent than the previous day. The 'Gare de France" defended by the anarchists fell to the Civil Guards, the employees of the Telephone Exchange surrendered to Assault Guards.

The Catalan Government resigned. Anarchist divisions at the front were ready to march to Barcelona but the CNT's regional committee announced that they didn't need them. That evening, new appeals were made to the workers to leave the barricades and to go home. Discontent grew in the ranks of the CNT-FAI. Many militants tore up their membership cards.

A significant part of the libertarian youth, many rank and file committees and groups in factories and quarters opposed the conciliatory attitude and short sightedness of the leadership of the Libertarian Catalan movement.. The Friends of Durutti proposed the formation of a revolutionary junta to replace the Generalitat. The POUM was to be admitted to this junta because "it is on the side of the workers". They demanded socialisation of the economy, dissolution of the parties and any armed corps involved in the aggression and punishment of the culprits. This stand was rejected by the regional committee of the CNT. Later on the group was expelled from the CNT.

The Friends of Durutti, despite their name, were not survivors of the groups Los Solidarios or Nosotros to which Durutti belonged. It was a small group formed by indomitables hostile to the militarisation of the militia and the participation of the CNT in government. It was led by the Faistes Carreno, Pablo Ruiz, Eleuterio Roig and Jaime Balius. Accused of towing POUM's

line and of being anarcho-bolsheviks, the group had little impact, its existence was short lived and it was never heard of after the summer of 1937. Nonetheless its positions shoud not be dismissed and need to be considered. The criticism against the leaders of the CNT was not unfounded. For example: the National Committee of the CNT, at a conférence of delegates on 28th March 1937, demanded compliance of all Confederation press to the directives of the National Committee. The motion was adopted by the majority of one. The minority decided to ignore the vote. Without any doubt, within the CNT leadership, specialists a la CNT developed without any control from the base and with it an authoritarian hierarchization of the organization and of the FAI.

The POUM leadership in this affair was not free from criticism. Andres Nin tried to check militants' ardour. A strange call by POUM executive committee proposed at the same time to clear out the enemy and to begin a withdrawal.

The climax was reached on the 5th of May. In the morning the government resigned to be back in in the evening. Berneri, one of the figures of the revolutionary opposition, together with Barbieri another Italian anarchist, was assassinated by the communists.

In the morning of May 6th wavering set in among the fighters deceived and disorientated by the behaviour of the regional CNT leadership. Soon the abandoned barricades were reoccupied. The CNT leaders renewed their calls for calm. The fight ended but nobody went back to work, the fighters remained in their places. In the night of 6th to 7th of May the leaders of CNT-FAI reiterated their position: retreat from the barricades, liberation of prisoners and hostages. In the morning, 7th of May the government accepted the cease fire offer.

The failure of the insurrection signalized the beginning of a terrible setback for the first months' achievements of the Revolution. The ascendancy of Stalinism, relying on the most hostile social layers in the republican camp, affirmed its lf. The assassinations of revolutionary militants by Stalinists intensified. In the summer of 1937 Lister's communist troups entered Aragon to eliminate, by terror, the libertarian agricultural collectives and give the land back to the old owners. The

peasants' support for collectivisation was such that Lister's attempts came to a bitter failure.

"Neither you nor we launch the masses of Barcelona into this movement. It was a spontaneous reaction against a Stalinist provocation. Now is the decisive moment to make revolution. Either we take charge of the movement to destroy the internal enemies or else the movement fails and we will be destroyed. We ought to choose between the revolution or the counter-revolution". This alternative by POUM on the night of 3rd of May was rejected by CNT, reported Julian Gorkin.(4)

If this is to be done again

Nonetheless, it would be a serious mistake to accuse the leadership of the CNT of "treason" in relation to its objectives. But a fair non dogmatic evaluation of the actions of the confederation and the behaviour of its leaders during the Civil War is long overdue.

We have to keep in mind that the Spanish Revolution was not the Russian Revolution. The latter might be considered as the last revolution of the 19th century in terms of technical means. The Spanish Revolution was the first in the 20th century where armoured cars, aviation, radio etc. were in use. It was a training ground of Hitler's Germany for the Second World War.

In Russia the State was in decay and the social forces which opposed the revolution were in a state of disintegration. Russian society, after so many years of a terrible war, was disintegrating. This situation allowed a small group of men -a few thousands in 1917 - to capture power. The extreme degree of organization and discipline of this group couldn't, in itself, explain the efficacy of its action, which does not belittle the strategic genius of Lenin, in any case, in the beginning.

Spanish society had not exhibited decayng features. The operative social forces were precisely defined and anchored in their mode of living. The Spanish bourgeoisie, especially the Catalan, was powerful and influential. Much of the middle class served as a buffer and, espoused all the more the idea of the dominant class, feared proletarisation. Such a situation had not existed in Russia.

The proletarian revolution in Spain had to face different and more formidable adversaries than the Russian revolutionaries since, after the First World War, the Western capitalist powers were exhausted and the task forces they sent were undermined by dese tions. The Spanish libertarians had to confront at the same time: fascists, Stalinists and republicans. It was a lot.

The Russian Revolution occurred in a period of general collapse. The powers that could fight against it were exhausted by four years of a terrible war, while the Spanish Revolution took place in a time, never seen before, of rising reactionary forces: Nazism in Germany, Mussolinian fascism, whose armies unequivocally supported Spanish fascism. Among the reactionary forces figured Stalinism, whose revolutionary Marxists accusing CNT of all evils, were, if not directly, at least intellectually responsible.

Had the libe tarians decided to do so they could easily have eliminated the communists in May 1937. The regional committee, to a point, was correct not to withdraw the anarchist divisions from the front.(5) The militia of Barcelona and the region, the insurgent workers, the suburban defence committee were enough for the task. This could have been true of Catolonia, but in Madrid the CNT was not a dominant force. The leadership of the CNT could not risk to face alone a fascist-Stalinist-republican coalition. Furthermore, to speculate on the eagerness of the Spanish working class, which in a great enthu- siastic surge would have supported the catalonian libe tarians, was a risk the Confedetion was not willing to take. Spain would have exploded into many antagonistic blocks becoming an easy prey for Francoists. C.M. Lorenzo had, without doubt, a reason to say that a "triumph of Spanish anarchism leading to the collapse of the republican legality would provoke a sure coup against it by the formation of an international coalition from the Soviet Union (removal of all aid in arms and in ammunitions) to Western democratic states(immediate recognition of the fascist government and economic blockade)."(6) The interna- tional working class movement and, in particular, the workers movement in France, largely under Stalinist influence, would it support an anarchist revolution in Spain that opposed the Spanish communists by arms?

True, the libertarians found themselves facing a fascist-Stalino-

republican coalition. The question that poses itself in this situation easy to be asked sixty years after, is: was it not better to try a coup? It is easy to reproach the Spanish libertarians for not doing so, if one is, as Carlo Semprun-Maura put it in the "full lunatic identification with the Russian Revolution", if ones revolutionary aims are to storm the Winter Palace.

Today, the libertarians could be reproached for making a wrong analyses of both Stalinism and bourgeois republicanism. Today we are confounded by their naivety (7): they alone honestly played the game of antifascism. Only they were authentic anti-fascists. Their priority was the liquidation of Spanish fascism without precondition to monopoly of power. In the name of anti- fascist unity, the CNT, despite being in the majority in Catalonia, had, in relation to its strength, infinitely less representation in decision making bodies, as token of its good faith

The libertarians, at their own expense, proved that anti-fascism is meaningless without social revolution. They demonstrated that to liquidate fascism in alliance with fascism-Stalinism or with the republican bourgeoisie is impossible.

This is the lesson that even today holds ground.

Rene Berthier

Reference

1. The POUM (United Marxist Workers Party) founded in 1935, membership 3,000 to 5,000 before the Civil War (one million CNT). Incorrectly described as Trotskyite even today by the Trots (who recuperated it a bit after Ken Loach's film) broke with Trotsky and the IV International.
The attitude of the CNT toward POUM was partially explained by the fact that the relationship between the two was not at its best. Joaquin Maurin had accused the Confederation of all evils.
2. In some strikes CNT workers opposed UGT employers and there were even armed clashes between collectivised peasants of the CNT and UGT small land owners.
3, The Soviet "Aid" paid expensively by the Spanish republicans stipulated the presence of soviet military "advisers" who installed the tcheka that executed innumerable revolutionary militants.(8) Quoted by C.M. Lorenzo, *Les Anarchistes espagnols et le pouvoir,* p.226, and by J. Gorkin,

Les communistes contre la revolution espagnole, Belfond, pp. 59-60.

4. That the anarchists could, without difficulty, physically eliminate the communists in May 1937 was later on proved by the events of 5th March, 1939 in Madrid when the CNT realised that it could have done it in the beginning. On 2nd of March Negrin effected a real coup d'etat and appointed communists to all important military commands. Then the CNT decided to settle its account with the Stalinists by crushing the communist troups. From 5th to 12th March the IV corps of the anarchist army (150,000 commanded by Cipriano Mera crushed the I, the II and the III corps of the communist army (350, 000) According to some oral testimony all communist officers above the sergeants were executed. The class nature of the Spanish Communist Party is well portrayed by C.M. Lorenzo: "Then it seemed that a real collapse of the Communist Party occurred. Masses of people who joined the Party due to the hate of the Revolution, fear or love of 'order' or political opportunism and ambition lacked real ideological formation and knowledge of Marxism. All these people abandoned the Party when they saw its bad turn and the communists were reduced to what they were in the beginning of the Civil War: a handful of cadres without any hold on the population. The Communist Party due to circumstances inflated artificially. It was a monstrous body with feet of clay". C.M. Lorenzo, *Les Anarchistes et le pouvoir,* ed. Le Seuil, p.327.

5. C.M.Lorenzo, op.cit, p. 267

6 The day before the first Soviet ship arrived to unload flour, sugar and butter, not long since the Catalan Communists created food shortage and price increase by disbanding the the workers committee of supplies (7th of January) using it as a pretext to accuse the anarchists as beng responsible for the shortage. *Solidaridad Obrera* on 21 January 1937, evoked lyrically: "People were thrilled by a profound human significance of the first visit of other people'.Emotions contributed to solidarity. This messenger of the Russian proletariat bringing to Spain a few tones of food, offers of their wives to ours, these kind caresses of the little children of the Orient to the Iberian children..." and so on. The CNT daily could specify that all these products were dearly paid and the gold sent to Russia. This is also the case of the weapons delivered to Spain, mostly old and selectively distributed.